

Dear Tribal Leader,

As you know, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Act), charged the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) with distributing nearly \$1 billion to eligible Tribal governments and entities to bring broadband connectivity to historically unserved and underserved Tribal communities through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program. The Act also authorized an additional \$288 million for NTIA to fund a Broadband Infrastructure Program for partnerships between states and/or political subdivisions of a state and fixed broadband service providers to deploy infrastructure to areas lacking qualifying broadband service (25/3 mbps with low latency), especially rural areas. The application windows for these programs closed in September and August, respectively. NTIA is currently reviewing the applications it received for both programs and anticipates beginning to award grants by late 2021 and continuing into early 2022. Under the Act, work under these grants generally must be completed within one year of award; however, the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information may grant an extension of the award period for infrastructure projects upon request.

In 2009, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) assisted NTIA in meeting its Section 106 Tribal outreach obligations for American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants that funded broadband deployment to unserved and underserved areas through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). After consulting with Tribes, the FCC made minor modifications to allow NTIA to use the Tower Construction Notification System (TCNS) to ensure that Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) were provided an opportunity to comment on BTOP projects. TCNS helped NTIA complete Section 106 reviews and rapidly award more than \$4 billion in BTOP funds supporting projects like the Nez Perce Reservation Broadband Enhancement, the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority, and Pine Telephone Company's broadband grant to serve Southeastern Oklahoma, including Tribal lands of the Choctaw Nation.

The FCC and NTIA are currently collaborating on a plan to continue NTIA's access to TCNS to meet its Section 106 responsibilities for these new grant programs. As with the BTOP program, TCNS will help grant recipients meet their project schedules by enabling NTIA to initiate Section 106 notifications to THPOs at the earliest possible time after award, in the most efficient way possible.

TCNS will function exactly as it did in support of BTOP. NTIA staff will enter basic project information into TCNS. TCNS will send Tribes a dedicated Weekly Notice listing only NTIA projects in addition to the separate standard Weekly Notice of proposed wireless facilities. NTIA or the grant recipient will follow up with Tribes directly to answer questions and determine Tribes' interest in consultation for each project. Each Tribe will continue to receive all system notices according to the preferences it has entered into TCNS, meaning by email, regular mail, or both. We anticipate that Tribes will begin to receive these NTIA notifications before the end of the year.

In anticipation of the upcoming project notifications in the next few months, we encourage each Tribe to have their THPO office review, and, where necessary, update their TCNS point of contact, contact preference (email, regular mail, or both), and areas of interest by November 30, 2021. Confirming that these settings are current in TCNS will ensure receipt of both NTIA and FCC Section 106 notifications. Any questions related to updating or using TCNS can be emailed to TCNSHelp@fcc.gov, and technical support services are available at <https://www.fcc.gov/available-support-services>.

The FCC and NTIA share the goal of increasing access to and adoption of broadband services in Tribal communities. We jointly invite you to submit comments or questions regarding our continuing cooperation, or to request a virtual meeting with us to discuss NTIA's use of TCNS to speed deployment

of critical broadband infrastructure and services in Tribal communities across the country. We ask that you please email any comments, questions, or meeting requests regarding this matter to Matthew Duchesne, FCC Office of Native Affairs and Policy (matthew.duchesne@fcc.gov) or Adam Geisler, NTIA Tribal Liaison (ageisler@ntia.gov) by November 12, 2021.

Respectfully,

Joel Taubenblatt
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Wireless Telecommunications Bureau
FCC

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NTIA

cc: Tribal Historic Preservation Officer